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ABSTRACT

Transcripts are presented of interviews with 20 individuals of various ethnic backgrounds who live in the Westport-Norwalk, Connecticut, area. The document is part of a project to investigate the ethnically varied cultural, heritage of the Westport-Norwalk area from 1900 to 1979. Persons interviewed are identified by ethnic group, including Italian, Irish, Scots-Irish, Jewish, West Indian, Puerto Rican, German, Costa Rican, Polish, Hungarian, and Black. Nineteen sample questions are listed to aid interviewers elicit the required information from persons interviewed. Questions include: Where do you come from? When did you come to Westport or Norwalk? Do you remember what it was like then? Where did you live? What kind of food did your mother cook? Where did you go to school? Do you speak the language your parents spoke? Did your mother sew the clothes for the family? What kind of work did you do? Were you a close family? Was there a difference between the way boys were treated and the way girls were treated? How do you think life has changed for you and your children? (DB)

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TRANSCRIPTS OF ORAL HISTORIES

FOR

AN ETHNOHISTORY OF THE WESTPORT - NORWALK AREA FROM 1900 TO TODAY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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A Project of the
Westport-Weston Arts Council
CETA STAFF

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SP-021513

TRANSCRIPTS OF ORAL HISTORIES

These are edited, shortened versions of the original tapes.

We have tapes and transcripts of the following people who so generously gave of their time and have permitted us to use these interviews.

Vincent Latella	Norwalk
Michael Vigilante	Westport
Reverend Zoltan Szabo	Pastor, Hungarian Reformed Church of South Norwalk
Mr. Maldonado	Director of the South Norwalk Community Center
Caroline Mary Newman	Norwalk
Florence Shankman	Norwalk teacher
Steve Cenatiempo	Norwalk
Mrs. Mary Moccia	Westport
Harriet Sherman	Teacher, South Norwalk and Rowayton
Teresa Ferrandino	Norwalk
James Sutton	Norwalk
Theresa Amato	Norwalk
Eddy Brown	Norwalk
Adrienna Pascal	South Norwalk
Mrs. Minnie Andersen	Westport
Mr. and Mrs. Romero	South Norwalk
Carole Lewis	PDC, Norwalk
Rabbi Byron T. Rubenstein	Temple Israel, Westport
Ephraim Cotto	Norwalk, El Camino Church
John Henry	Norwalk

We also have transcripts and have used voices from tapes, with permission for use granted by The Peoples of Connecticut Oral History Project, Department of History, University of Connecticut, Bruce M. Stave, Project Director.

Sample Project Questions:

1. Where do you come from?
2. When did you come to Westport? Norwalk?
3. Do you remember what it was like then?
4. Where did you live?
5. What kind of food did your mother cook?
6. How did you learn to cook? (if woman)
7. Where did you go to school?
8. Do you speak your native language? (if born abroad)
   Do you speak the language your parents spoke? (if born here)
9. Did your mother sew the clothes for the family?
10. Did you learn to sew or knit or crochet?
11. Was there a difference between the way boys were treated and the way girls were treated?
12. What kind of work did you do?
13. Were you a close family? How did you celebrate parties and holidays?
14. How old were you when you went to work?
15. Do you belong to any social clubs? If yes, what are they for?
16. Was there music or dancing when you were young?
17. What did your parents do for amusement?
18. How do you think life has changed for you? For your children?
19. Do you live the same way now as you did when you were young?

Notes for Interviewers:

Make sure your equipment is working properly before you start interview. It is best to use a cassette recorder so that tapes will be standardized for filing and use the best cassettes available. The recorder should be placed so that its built-in mike is as close as possible to the person being interviewed and on the same level. It is preferable to use the built-in mechanism rather than a microphone which often picks up some of the noise in the recorder and gets moved around, making a great deal of background noise. If two people go out together to interview, it would be possible for one to hold the mike near the person being interviewed.

There are two different kinds of interviews - one for information alone and the other for information and reproduction. The technical aspects are not so important for a tape that is merely for information, but is vital for a tape that is to be listened to by more than one person. Background noises become very unpleasant and often overwhelm the speaker, so the room should be quiet and the interview should not be done near a machine that is working. In addition, the interviewer should not break in with questions, should not respond with "right" or "wow" while the interviewee is speaking. The purpose of the interview should be carefully explained beforehand so that many questions can be eliminated. The interviewee should be requested to start the interview by stating his/her name and where he/she was born. A relaxed atmosphere is essential so that the interviewee does not become uncomfortable. Remember, we want their story, not yours.

The goals of the interviews should be well worked out beforehand so that the questions elicit the required information.

John Henry - Norwalk - Irish
(Columnist for the Irish Echo)

I came here 23 years ago to find work. I had an uncle here in Norwalk who invited me to come and visit for a year or two and see how I liked it. My uncle owned a meat market.

In the first year I was here I was drafted by the U.S. Army. At that time, before you emigrated, you had to sign a statement that you would register with the draft. I was 23 when I was drafted in February of 1958.

I was in Korea and when I got out was in the active reserve and was reactivated during the Berlin crisis for a year. I was in the service for 3 years out of the first five in this country.

My first job here was with Nash Engineering and I am still working for them. I am a senior electrical engineer. I went to the University of Bridgeport and to Norwalk Technical evenings.

I came here and liked it very much. My sister is still living in the same village in Ireland and my brother is in Dublin. My kids have been there five or six times. We like to keep in touch. I have two girls. We try to get the girls to do Irish dancing, step dancing, but now they are too busy and they've dropped it.

My wife comes from the same village in Ireland. She came out here to marry me about five years after I came here. We moved into the downstairs of a house in Norwalk. Then we bought a house on Fairview Avenue up by the hospital.

My uncle came out here in the 1920's. At that time a great many Irish boys worked with a food chain, the Butler Stores in New York. He became meat manager and eventually was offered a job as manager of the meat market for the A & P store on Wall Street. That's gone now. Then he and his partner bought the store on Wall Street when the A & P moved.

I write a weekly column, a social type, about Irish happenings in Connecticut for the Irish Echo. There are not too many Irish born in Norwalk. Westport has an Irish community. The column has news of weddings, birthdays, dances, sports events. In Stamford the Irish have their own Hall where they have dances and communion breakfasts. On March 17, St. Patrick's Day, we have a dinner dance in Norwalk and participate in raising the Irish flag over City Hall. We have many family picnics in the spring and weekends in the Catskills. We're members of the Norwalk Ancient Order of Hibernians. Hibernia is an ancient name for Ireland. In many of the old maps you can see the name Hibernia written.

There are big Irish-American clubs in the large cities in Connecticut. In Norwalk we have just over 100 members. We put out a newsletter in Norwalk every month. It tells about whatever happens of interest to people in the group. I edit that.

Every Friday evening we have an Irish dance class at St. Jerome's Church Hall. Step dancing is like square dancing. The musicians play the tin whistle, the accordian and the fiddle. It's a lively, lilting, jaunty type of dancing. There are Irish reels, Irish jigs and the Irish hornpipe. As opposed to that is what the adults would dance at an Irish ceili where they have Irish waltzes and set dances like "The Walls of Limerick," "The Siege of Ennis," which are

done the full length of a hall with maybe 100 couples. Last October we had an Irish dance with an Irish band in St. Mary's Communion Hall. There are a lot of Irish bands here. But it's not like a true ceili. Here they mix popular dances with the old Irish dances. The ceili means a get-together, a house party; it's a time when you dance with everyone and people get to meet each other. At a ceili we serve tea, coffee and Irish soda bread.

My wife makes a very good soda bread. When I first came over, I was told that corned beef and cabbage were typical Irish food and I had never heard of corned beef before I came over here. In Ireland, it's baked ham and cabbage. In Ireland a lot of potatoes are eaten. I would find a dinner lacking if it didn't have some kind of potato. In Ireland every breakfast has eggs of some kind, but here I don't have eggs every morning. In Ireland, in the homes at meal time, there is no wine, even for company, just water. Until I came here I did not have a drink. I did not have one until I was 24, 25.

In Norwalk we used to have a feis, an Irish dance competition, every year. They don't have one any more. But there is one at Yonkers Raceway, outdoors, that goes on from 10 a.m. till dark. My daughters danced in the feis at Yonkers. They set up 6 or 7 stages with a band on each stage. It's a good carnival atmosphere, but it's also quality dancing. Each dance teacher designs her own uniforms for her dance students. They wear short skirts, black stockings, soft shoes for the jig and hard soled shoes for the reel.

On March 17 there is dancing at the Norwalk Mall that is open to the public. It's busy at that time with dinner dances all around Connecticut.

I saw the Chieftains play; they are the ultimate in Irish music. They're the most famous group in Ireland. They come out here on tour every year. Most of the records of traditional Irish music are made here in New Canaan.

We did think about going back to Ireland to live, but after you have children, it's difficult. I know of people who went back. Some have stayed and some haven't. We're here 23 years and our life is more here than there. Our friends are still here. When we go back to our parish we don't know anyone any more. A parish has about 1500 people and when we left, such was the closeness of Irish life at that time, we would have known everybody. You'd know who lived where. But now I know very few of the people. Many I grew up with have left, to England, Rhodesia (to work on the railroads), Australia and other parts of Ireland.

In the Norwalk area the Irish came in the 1920's to work with the chain stores. They also were carpenters and plumbers and worked in the building industry.

There are not many immigrants from Ireland now.

Our older daughter goes to Central Catholic High School and our younger daughter will go next year. We're involved with the church but not totally. Our children go to religious school every Sunday. Whatever we're asked to do for the church, we do and we're happy to do it.

Adrienna Pascal

Manager of the New City Hotel in South Norwalk for the last 12 years. I was born in Bridgeport. When I was 18 I went to work in the Fine Arts restaurant across from the Y in Westport.

I'm Scots, English and Irish. My mother who was English and Irish was born here, my father was born in Scotland. I was brought up by my grandmother. When I came to Norwalk it was very beautiful.

This is a high crime area, just like 42nd Street. You're not safe here. The neighborhood has gone to Hell. There used to be stores here, there used to be people on the streets. I used to come to Norwalk and come shopping. Westport didn't have many stores.

The flood of 1955 destroyed a lot of Norwalk. Water Street went. Before the flood there was nice businesses here, a hardware store, a taxi office there, a big pawn shop, it used to be nice here. They were all filled up and it was a pleasure to walk the streets here. Not now.

15 years old when I immigrated. My father had emigrated when he was a young man and then after 13 years went back to Italy, was married and stayed there. But because my father was an American citizen, I was born American citizen.

My father lived in a small village of about 450 population, mostly farmers. He had 5 children and only 3 acres of land. We could not make ends meet, so some of us had to leave to make a living. The U.S. was the land of opportunity.

When I was 21, in 1955, I could send for my family. I had a home ready for them and they were able to pay for their passage by selling the family home.

I went to the 6th grade in Italy. There was no school during the war years.

My experience when I first came - I did not know English. I left Italy February 17 and arrived March 2. When I arrived, I went to live with an uncle in Philadelphia. Then I visited friends in New Jersey and found a job in a lumber yard.

I went to night school to learn the language. I wanted to become Americanized completely. When I became 19 I was drafted and served 2 years as a medical aid technician in the Korean War. I went to classes in the army. The service gave me my start. I was able to pass a U.S. correspondence course for a high school diploma. When I got out of the army, I went to a program for veterans and went to college. When I moved to Norwalk I went one year to the University of Bridgeport and 2 to Norwalk Community College. I do not have any degrees, but I do have 90 credits.

I worked for Perkin Elmer for 8 and a half years, a good job. Then I decided to go into my own business. So, I'm in the travel business and I love it.

In 1965 my family all went back to Italy. They had made money and were home-sick. They did not have enough education to be anything more than laborers here. They're all doing well for themselves in Italy. They bought houses near each other. My mother keeps asking me to go back but I'm too happy here. I've been living here for 26 years, got my education here, have my family here. My wife is from the same part of Italy as me. She went to school with my sister. We were married in Italy.

We remain very much Italian. In my particular case, we have friends from both sides. We're Americanized, but I do have a lot of contact with immigrants. I help them get settled, find them jobs. I work with the Norwalk educational system teaching English. I fit in with both the Italian immigrants and Americans.

We are the only travel agency that is trilingual - Spanish, French and Italian. The foreign speaking feel comfortable with us.

I love to help people. I'm a musician, so I perform at graduations and at parties we give for the adult education classes. I taught an ethnic heritage course.

I am trying to integrate immigrants with immigrants, to educate Americans so they will understand other groups. My course is based upon the peculiar problems

of the immigrant. He has left his friends, he has left his country, he has left his confidants. He's in a country where you swim or sink. Sometimes they are met by relatives, sometimes not. But they would do anything before going on welfare. They came here to better themselves.

The recent immigrants have always a family to come to. For 5 years someone has to be responsible for them, to give an affidavit of support. The majority get a job with relatives or a friend.

The girls have never worked outside the home in Italy. Eventually girls have to go on their own, to work. The first thing is a home of their own.

In Norwalk there is a factory with foreign-born supervisors. I make a phone call to get them jobs there. The pay scale is lower than in other factories, but it is a start.

It's an educational process. I teach them American customs, the American way of life. You don't want to become conspicuous. People will improve themselves only if their need is so great or if they want to be like the people around them. I didn't want to look conspicuous. I tried to blend in. Others are not like me. At home they only speak Italian. They stay with other Italians. But after 2 years most start to look around and make friends with American people. I see them changing.

There has to be a motivating factor.

The only way the immigrant can become comfortable is to adapt to the American way of life. Americans themselves have the tendency to regard foreigners as intruders. The American has no knowledge of the immigrant, of his background, of what makes him work so hard or look like that.

The immigrants very seldom go out because they're afraid of what awaits them.

At least 25% of the Norwalk population is Italian. The majority go to St. Mary's or St. Thomas or St. Joseph.

Clubs are the only social life most of them have, the Italian Social Club or the Sons of Italy.

My initial friends were Italian. I spoke Italian, I ate Italian food. There is a tendency to congregate with your own. But I never joined any ethnic clubs.

They don't register as Republican or Democrat. They're not affiliated with a party. The second generation is on the borderline. They tend to vote for an Italian name on the ballot because someday they might need assistance.

I feel proud to be an Italian.

We have the same standards the whole world has. We go from menial labor to blue collar, to white collar to the professions.

Work for the women is an escape from the home. They acquire an identity, a position in the world. They usually continue to work in this country. When they have children, the women prefer to stay home and take care of children if they are economically able. The immigrant Italians are not career type women. They are more homemakers because it was impressed upon them in their early years that a woman is strictly for the home.

Italian men are domineering. They are very family oriented. Inbred feelings and attitudes may not be displayed as much, but they still exist deep inside. I'm glad they're still there. Love, respect and responsibility are very important in our make-up.

Vincent Latella - Norwalk - Italian

I paint all my life. After 2, 3 years here I started to make a lot of murals all over. I have much responsibility here. I don't go too far any more. I like my bedroom, my place. I like to stay quiet.

I work on the Lockwood Matthews mansion to restore. It's a beautiful place.

I move to Norwalk 1966. I live for a long time in a big city in North Italy. I paint frescoes in the churches on the walls, on the ceiling.

Over here no church painting. In Italy it's different. In America it goes so fast. No look for quality. So you got a big space, look just to cover the wall.

So you can live well in this country if you have a security job. No really well like 10-15 years ago. For a little money then you buy a lot of things. I like the stores. I like the beach. I like a lot of things.

I liked Norwalk better before. More friendship. It's a little big now. People a little strange now. Now like a city, no little community any more.

I don't go to dances. My son, he goes. I don't participate in Sons of Italy. I don't dance. I'm too heavy. I like to relax.

When I got time, I paint.

I like spaghetti. My wife makes good spaghetti. I like macaroni. Eat it all the time. Whole family eat together.

This country give me possibility to make money, to buy the house. I work hard, I tell you.

I have a little difficulty with the language. If you come young, it's easy for you. For me, it's not so good. Ridiculous for me to go to school. I try one night. I say forget it. I can't do it. You learn some on T.V. and I learn with American people. I had no word of English before I come here. It took me 2 years to speak English.

I tell you I suffer a lot.

I have a couple of cousins who find me place to live. I come with my wife and son. It's a hard life. Now no more difficulty. I know people all over.

I decide I am too old to go to school. Teacher speak just English. In the same room are Italian, Polish, Greek people. You can't get other people to help.

I need more good years. I don't have much time. When I have time I paint. In this town we need a place to show paintings. We need it for the young people. It's no good in this town for the young people. Need a cheap place to teach painting, just enough to pay rent and light.

I have been teaching kindergarten for 50 years, the first 2 years in South Norwalk, then Rowayton half time. Mornings in South Norwalk and afternoons in Rowayton. I prefer being with the very young. I've had the children and some grandchildren of parents I taught.

Today we bus in black children. There are no black resident families in Rowayton. I have 7 black children out of 40. Today the black children have been to Head Start and day care, so they have broader experiences. All the children today are much more informed. Some of it is T.V. and they've taken trips, been to museums, to the Westport Nature Center. There are many things in our area to broaden their experiences.

The black children are different in some ways. They eat different foods, talk about different experiences. Southern foods survive in their homes.

When I first taught, 1928-1929, it was at the Knudson School; it's been torn down. It was a former observatory. Most children then came from homes where they spoke Italian and Hungarian. There were no special classes to help children. I remember one little Italian boy who would go to sleep every afternoon. I found out he drank wine for lunch and when I spoke to the father, he said, "I was brought up on wine and my children will be brought up on wine."

I remember years ago I had a little black boy who had rickets because he wasn't well-nourished. Today we catch it and get help for the children.

In those days we had large classes, 30-32 for just two and one half hours. We didn't have much time for individual help. But the children picked up English very quickly.

Many parents were working and didn't come to the school. We didn't have conferences then. The children often came to school with their brothers and sisters.

I went to Whistleville in South Norwalk to pick up children and take them to pageants at night at the Armory. At Christmas time the parents sent in Hungarian pastries. The children did folk dances: Hungarian, Italian, from different countries.

Now we have bilingual classes. We have language development classes.

Children in those days were much more shy than today. They expected to listen instead of contributing to discussion as they do today. That's probably because they were told to be quiet at home.

The bilingual classes are mostly Hispanic. We have quite a few Greek families here. Many countries are represented in Norwalk. In South Norwalk, the Knudson School area, there were few black children in 1928. Mostly Italian speaking there. Now they're all black.

Norwalk - Jewish

My father was a rabbi in Russian Poland. He had two jobs: a rabbinate and was in charge of a Talmudic Yeshiva, a seminary. The town was about the size of Norwalk. There was a ghetto. In Russia Jews had to live in certain towns and in certain part of those towns. My father was very prominent. He wrote books, commentaries on the Talmud. His name was Nathan. My brother came first and took the name of Nathanson. So, when I came, I took the same name.

My mother came from a rich manufacturing family. My father came from a poor family, but he was an educated intellectual.

I don't know when I was born, around 1892 maybe, because they didn't keep records. I was supposed to be a rabbi. I was the youngest. My father was quite old when I was born.

I came to the U.S. because I was a member of a socialist movement. There were many revolutionary youths then. I was for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. I was 13, 14 years old. It was dangerous for me to stay. My parents knew, they financed my trip. I went to Belgium by train, went to Antwerp and waited for a boat. There were many young immigrants there. I came in 1906. My brother was in Boston. My mother's nephew had come to America and manufactured raincoats and my brother worked for him. Then I came. I went to school in Boston at night. I worked during the day in a factory but there was a recession and they laid us off.

I never met discrimination. I went to college and got a job as janitor of the chemical laboratory and then I got paid for being in charge of the freshman laboratory. I had more jobs then you can shake a stick at. I graduated in 1913 with a degree and taught science all my life.

I was raised as a Catholic and so was my wife. I'd say thirty percent were Anglican, Methodist, and I'd say over 10% would be Islamic.

We were lucky, my brothers and I, because my father worked and as I said we were lower middle-class. Things were tough, we had no luxuries, but a least we ate and we didn't have to suffer too much. We ate and we were dressed. We went to a decent school. People derived a great deal of consolation from their association with the church; not only the Catholic, but the Protestants also.

The church offered direct help. Parish organizations, church-run organizations would give help of an immediate nature. And I remember, for instance have you ever heard of the St. Vincent DePaul Society? I remember as a young man I was involved as a member of the Society and that I could not contribute a lot of money, but I did contribute much time to charitable work. Helping poor people in a variety of ways - as a matter of fact, my borther-in-law, he is a lawyer now, and he is still involved in it still. And he remembers from the time that he was a little boy. When I first came to this country, I remember that I couldn't get a house and that I asked a priest if there was a chapter of the St. Vincent DePaul Society here. You know these were the things that you went to a priest for about and you employed DePaul assistance and they would try to help. Well, he barely recollected that there was a St. Vincent DePaul Society and for that matter, that there even was such a thing.

There was no chapter here and there still isn't. My wife is a member of the auxiliary and once a year or twice a year we have dinners for the poor and we distribute food at various times, but things like that.

We had what were called Friendly Societies, I don't know if you have ever heard of them. A Friendly Society is a, I think it is a typically Caribbean concept.

Dying and getting buried were very serious concerns. People were always concerned about having sufficient money to bury them. And if they should get sick, you know, there weren't any things like hospital plans or social security, or unemployment insurance; so what they did was like a little, it wasn't even a corporate entity because the money wasn't even invested anywhere. We would go to a meeting house, you know a school or a church, and you would see these people piling in and they would donate six pennies a week, or twelve pennies a week, or two dollars a month, and this money would go. After fifteen or twenty years you know they may have $900 or a $1,000, which was a handsome figure for getting a decent burial.

The fact was that being buried or dying and going to your undertaker and getting a coffin represented a tremendous financial burden on the family - not a doctor or a lawyer or something like that and be serious about it.

I know that most Caribbean types tend to get themselves in enclaves. I think that the biggest Caribbean enclave is in Brooklyn, New York, where you have hundreds of thousands of Caribbean types. The imprimature of approval among many of the Caribbean types, obviously of second generation of West Indian heritage, the minute that you are a young person and you become acceptable if both or if one of your parents are West Indian. This is equated with academic success or good manners, or your general comportment, or your motivation. If you do well in school it was because your parents were West Indian. If you happen to be very mannerly it was for the same reason.

I do not think that Caribbean types are special in any way. I don't think that they are different from the American black in any way, okay. I think that their motivation may be a little more acute. We were never repressed, okay? Everything was obtainable. You will find that in British thought, a great deal of deference is placed to academic accomplishment, or professional accomplishment, and a tendency to excuse more human failings simply because this guy is a lawyer, or this guy is a doctor, or this guy is an engineer, or this guy is -- if you, for instance, to be extreme, if you are a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer and you beat your wife, you can be excused. If you are not, you cannot be excused. That kind of thing, you know. People defer to you -- well, my brother is a surgeon. He went through the same work that I did, he never married -- he just went to the university and had his residency in a hospital in New York.

I came to America in 1952. My second child was born here. In 1953 I came up here (Norwalk) and got a job with the Armstrong Rubber Company. This was for $55 a week and that was the most money I had made in my life.

I was an accountanting junior. What it was is that I paid the plant, that is what I did. I had a section of the plant a couple of hundred guys. It was piece work, and by my calculation piece work was not difficult and nobody gave me a job in it, but they gave me a test and saw that I was adept at mathematics. I worked for them at that. It didn't take me long to realize that I was making $55 a week -- now this was a plant that manufactured tire materials. What they did was they got 50 pound bales of raw rubber and dumped it into a giant mixer and they dumped in carbon black and other various chemicals and put it up into big rolls. Then they would ship this up to the mother plant where they would make tires out of it. It was a pretty dirty job. But I found out that these guys were making $135 to $145 a week. I was only making $55 a week. Well, they never had any one of my color working in their office before.

Everything was equated in terms of money and they knew, and they knew that they gave me that job because I had the educational background. That was the first time in my life that I ever met a person that was over twelve and who couldn't read nor write. The first time, and many of the blacks in the plant couldn't. My $55 a week and they were making $135 a week and the other white people who were working in the office were making twice my pay

I was preoccupied with survival and there was no room for anything else. Because from 1954 until 1962 I worked about thirteen hours a day including Saturdays. There was no room for anything else, automobile payments, as well as children's doctors, food, clothes, small trips. There was very little room for excesses. I was very much involved with my family's survival. This is not a success story. I am a very uncomplicated fellow. I just saw what my responsibilities were toward my family and it was just a case of survival.

I am content at the moment to work. We moved here in 1967. How we moved here, because I started to do some freelance work on my own and I could make a couple of thousand dollars just working on my own. What it meant was that I would come home from work and then do some outside work until 1:00 in the morning. I did that for about a year and a half. Then I put a down payment on a house and we moved into here.

As far as my progress in the company is concerned, I am still the only guy (black) in an engineering capacity. But it is a position of trust and responsibility. Wherever I travel I have a lot of companies who rely on me. There is some prestige in that. But when you come to think of it, I haven't really progressed. But it doesn't really make me mad, because I've gotten to the point where I am equating everything in terms of money. It's unfortunate, but you have to. The job that I've worked at - in the nine and a half years that I have worked there - my salary has increased at a tremendous pace I would say. Simply because I have some talent, some devotion to work...

I think that the white people, the friends that I have had, have respected me for many years, long before I went to school and these are the same friends that I have had. Okay, right after I got out of school, I started to think consciously about the black people of this country. I had been able to start on a mad rush with your eyes fixed on one goal and that goal being your wife and your family having bread, clothes and a house. So I was able to slow up a little bit so that I could take a side glance. I started to take a look around and I started to wonder about things. Perhaps I could get myself involved. So I heard about the Catholic International Council. I didn't know what it was, but there was a meeting and they were inviting people, so I went. I met people there and I made friends there and we have been friends since then. At that time - this was in 1965 - there was a shortage of public housing and we took up the cudgels and tried to find housing for them.

And we worked and we pounded on doors, we visited the schools, we talked to guidance counselors, because I was concerned about the kind of guidance that they were giving to black kids and I was concerned about these things and I still am, but I have not been involved in education as I suppose I could be. But the fact that oriented as I was about the importance of black achievement, it bothered me that in the city of Norwalk not even one black child - and I've lived here over twenty years - not even one black child came even close to a merit scholarship. These questions bothered me even then, but we got deeply involved and so we worked together and got to know the priests that were involved with the black people. So I worked with them from 1960 to 1965

Norwalk - Puerto Rican

I came here in 1941 when I was 10 years old. I went through the 6th grade in Puerto Rico. In Norwalk they put me in 4th grade.

My father worked in a little factory, Zell Products. He stayed 20 years. When the factory closed he had no pension. He had to get another job. When he started, he made $30/week. There was a strike in the factory and we ate potatoes all the time. Zell hired mostly Puerto Ricans. They had 2 houses on Orchard Street that they rented to people who worked in the factory.

When my father brought my mother here, they both went to work. My mother never worked before she came to U.S. In Puerto Rico she did work at home, she hand-embroidered sheets and pillow cases. In Puerto Rico the people were poor. I remember we used to walk to my grandmother's. She's 98 now and she still says, "If you do something wrong, I hit you." My clothes were clean and starched, not like now when you just throw them in the washing machine.

My father was a bus driver in Puerto Rico. Then things got bad. He lost his job and the only way out was to come to the U.S. It was described as a heaven, covered with gold and silver. When we came, what a disappointment. New York City was covered with garbage.

In Norwalk we came to live in one of the factory houses and made friends right away. In Puerto Rico we had an apartment and used to all sleep in one room. We always had 3 or 4 cousins living with us.

In Norwalk we would go to school and have jobs when we came home. My mother would cook for 15, 16 men to make additional income. We all ate in the same dining room. We had real Puerto Rican meals.

Then my father and a friend bought a house in S.N.

When we came I was the only Puerto Rican in the Tracy School, the only Spanish-speaking kid. There was no problem during class but at play time I didn't know who to play with. I was always careful not to get involved with anyone. I didn't know how to communicate with them. When I was 16 I wanted to leave school and get a job, but my parents said, "You're going to finish high school." So I did. I was engaged at 16 to my present husband. My cousin worked with him at Supreme Slipper. My mother would feed him and that's how we met. We were engaged 4 years. I was married right after high school. My parents would not let me go out on dates.

In high school I was not really aware of discrimination because I always kept to myself. I missed everything social, no dances or proms. I like to work and see that it has done some good.

In my senior year I had a part-time job and learned bookkeeping and office work. I stayed there for 5 years. I was married and had 2 children.

As soon as I was 16 I worked part time, in factories in the summers. I was saving for the marriage.

More and more Puerto Ricans started coming here. My family brought their family and they brought their families. The Puerto Ricans are big on family. I have

an aunt with 12 children. The Puerto Rican community is now about 10,000. A lot are related to me.

In 1960 there was prejudice against Puerto Ricans.

The black population is also about 10,000.

Puerto Ricans and blacks tend to live in the same area in South Norwalk. They become scattered when they have money. The real estate people only show you houses in South Norwalk.

When I was married we lived at Washington Village and waited 5 years in line to get an apartment. My husband lost his hand at the factory where he worked. We didn't know what to do. We finally got a lawyer and he got us a small settlement, $5,000. There are no Puerto Rican lawyers. Now the South Norwalk Community Center helps. They can send you to a lawyer. There's an East Norwalk Community Center, a clinic, Head Start.

In 1965 I started working for St. Joseph's Center. People came to me with their problems. Then I got a job with SPEAK, Special Prevention Education and Recovery, funded by the federal government and the state. I am office manager. It is for young people of all races who have drug problems. Drugs are a problem among the Spanish-speaking, but they're afraid to admit it. Alcoholism is worse now than drugs.

Norwalk is a melting pot of everything. There are 3 or 4,000 Costa Ricans. They have low economy, no jobs, very poor; that's why they come. We have an interpreters' program from NEON, Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now, for hospital, but funds were cut off.

There is tension between Costa Ricans and Puerto Ricans. Connecticut has an immigration problem, one of the biggest populations of Spanish-speaking, about 200,000 in the state.

First, the educated came as residents. Then others came with only tourist visas and they do work even though they're not supposed to. There are illegal aliens here, but no one says anything. They're here and they're making a living.

At 16 I was confirmed at St. Joseph's Church, took my first Holy Communion. St. Jo's is the only parish that has services for Spanish-speaking. We started in a store front, then the basement of St. Jo's in 1965, and then in 1971 they started a regular 12 o'clock Sunday mass in Spanish with Spanish music and instruments. Now the Methodist Church has started Spanish-speaking services.

The Costa Ricans and Colombians send their children to Catholic schools. I had to put my children in public schools because the Catholic schools are so expensive.

When we came to the U.S. we lived differently. My mother had to go right to work. I had to work to do my own wedding. It is not our custom for parents to pay for the wedding. At first my husband did not like my working, but he came to accept it.

I think Puerto Rican people here tend to keep all our customs, our culture, we fight for it.

The Church is very important. The Spanish-speaking see a priest as a God. I would love to become a priest. I serve communion. Women are now allowed to take part in the mass. I belong to a church group, we meet every Wednesday night, it's for the Spanish-speaking.

I was asked to run for City Council. I ran at large and lost, but then I was appointed to commissions and committees and next time I ran, I won. I'm the only Spanish-speaking person on the City Council.

Most Spanish-speaking do not get involved in politics. Now there is an informational Spanish-speaking group that works statewide to get people to register and vote. Once you get people involved, you'll have candidates.

Many Puerto Rican women do not want to go away from the home. When I went out I had to tell my family everything to prevent scandal. There are not that many who are liberated. We did have a Spanish club and had dances Saturday nights, but it lasted only 1 year. We had another, we used to have parties, play cards, but it faded away.

The pattern is to go back to Puerto Rico, build a house there or live on a farm and if it doesn't go well, they come back and start over.

The second generation has the most enthusiasm. My parents held on to their own language. My generation has both languages. My children tend to learn English and be more integrated with the English-speaking. I've taken them back to Puerto Rico twice to keep them aware of Puerto Rican culture. They are trying to assimilate children to one culture which is not right. Columbus school has a bilingual program, bicultural, for Greeks and Italians too.

Norwalk has Puerto Rican women teachers. Not many are in high occupational jobs. Only a few are going on to college. In the Spanish culture, kids do not go far from home. We are still very, very close to our parents.

Mrs. Minnie Andersen - Westport - German

After 66 years as a citizen of Westport, Mrs. Minnie Andersen, 81, has plenty of memories to share.

My father came over from Germany, leaving behind his wife and their four daughters, to earn enough money for our passage. I was about 9 when we arrived in New York City, where we all lived and worked for a few years. One day, my mother saw an ad in the paper for a family with girls; she replied, and it turned out to be someone in Westport who needed factory workers. We were brought to Westport and employed by Lee's Manufacturing Company. They found us a rental on Richmondville Avenue and took the rent from my father's paycheck. He made $9.00 a week, and the rest of us each earned $5.00. I was 15 then -- this was 1910. We stayed there for two or three years, then moved to Canal Street.

My father bought a cow and some chickens; he loved farm work. The year I was 18, a dam broke up in Weston and we had a big flood. The chickens all drowned, but my father put his boots on and went out to save the cow. He brought it into the kitchen, because the house was on higher ground. The next day we had to sell the chickens at 50¢ apiece.

That night my boyfriend was visiting me and he couldn't get home because of the flood waters. He yelled from my house up to his sister on King's Highway that he was spending the night, and she yelled back; there weren't any telephones then. That was the night that we got engaged and we were married a year later.

My husband's parents arrived on Ellis Island from Sweden, and were hired by Mr. Staples to be janitors of Staples High School. They lived in an apartment in the basement, and that is where my husband was born. (Years later my daughter would tell her friends at Staples this, and they wouldn't believe her.)

My husband and I walked to the Methodist Church to get married, with two friends who were going to stand up for us. When we got there he found that he'd forgotten the license, and had to walk all the way home to get it. We sat on the stone wall and waited, and then we got married.

We lived with his parents in one room of their house for ten years. He was earning $9 a week and I was earning $5, and we paid $10 a week for room and board. He was paying $1 a week on his motorcycle also, but in the ten years that we lived there, we saved up $1,000.

His parents gave us a piece of land on King's Highway next door to them, and we went to the bank and borrowed money and built our house. I've lived in that same house for 50 years -- that's Duck Haven.

We had a baby and I used to take her with me to my job, which was helping Mrs. Nash with her six children. I've had many jobs, but my husband worked for the same company for 48 years. One of Mrs. Nash's grandchildren was among the Girl Scouts who provided my Christmas dinner last year.

After my husband retired, he started throwing some bread to the wild ducks. He was a nut for animals. Pretty soon there were so many ducks that we didn't have enough bread, and more were coming every day. Someone who worked with Wildlife Preservation arranged for Pepperidge Farm to supply us with bread for free, and three times a week we would fill up the whole car.

Some swans would come, too. One day he grabbed a swan by the neck and brought it in to look in the mirror. People used to bring us sick ducks, tame ones and wild ones, and we would nurse them back to health. When people offered money to pay for the bread, Ernest would buy the ducks corn for dessert since the bread was free. When my hubby got sick, it broke his heart to look out the window and see all the ducks waiting for him. Gradually they went away, and my husband died two years ago.

If I had it all to do over again, I would do it in Westport for sure.

Mr. and Mrs. Romero - South Norwalk - Costa Rican

They come from Costa Rica, a small but beautiful country. He came 20 years ago, she came 16 years ago. They came from a barreo (town) near the city of San Jose.

He was 21 years old when he came. He had finished 8th grade and was working. He had a sister living in Darien married to a man who was a foreman in a shoe shop. So he came straight to the place where his brother-in-law worked and had a job right away.

She knew his family in Costa Rica. She came to the United States with a friend. She thought she'd come for a year and try it out. She went to Junior High School in Costa, Rica, then went to secretarial school. She studied high school courses at night.

Her mother came 1 year after she did. The rest of her family is still in Costa Rica.

He came from a large family; there were 18 children and he is one of the youngest. His father was foreman of a shoe shop in Costa Rica. It was hard to support 18 children. So he came to the U. S. to make some money to send to his family.

He and his wife and children have been back to visit 4 times. He would like to go back some day to live. She isn't so sure.

When they came there was no problem getting visas, but it is difficult now because so many apply for visitors' visas and then do not go back but stay on in the U. S. and work.

He is a permanent resident. She is a citizen and their children are citizens. So they have no problem; they can go back and forth as much as they want.

He has worked in factories in Norwalk since he left Darien, then Burndy which is where he works now, makes good money and gets good benefits.

His wife works too. When she first came she got a job at a factory making small electronic parts and is still there. Her mother takes care of the children.

The factories, he says, take advantage of people who do not know what to do or have language problems. It's even hard for them to go to restaurants. He didn't know how to order food when he first came. He ate hamburgers for 3 or 4 months before he found out there were other things to eat. He spoke no English when he came. They teach English in the schools in Costa Rica but you don't really learn it, it's just passing tests. The best way to learn, they think, is to go to movies, listen to the radio and television and at work. She says she also has learned English from her children. The children speak Spanish, but they don't like to. They have to speak Spanish to her mother who has little English. The children speak English at school and to each other.

They go to Spanish mass at St. Joseph's Church. They are very active members of the Church. All their friends are active in the Church.

Most of the Costa Ricans who come here only care about work, about making money for their retirement. In Costa Rica it is the responsibility of the children to take care of the parents. Not here.

They try to bring up their children the Costa Rican way but it's hard. They want to be like other children. In school in Costa Rica you have to respect the teacher. There is much more discipline. You must stand up for the teacher. In Costa Rica the children feel free. They can go around by themselves. But in South Norwalk you can't let the children out on the streets, especially the girls.

Florence Shankman - Teacher - Norwalk

I started to teach in 1930 in the old Center School on Main Street, Norwalk, a building that was put up in the 1800's.

I had a 4th and 5th grade combination class. Those were the days when everyone learned at the same time. The desks and chairs were nailed down so the children couldn't move around.

We had a great many children from the working class population, Italian, Polish, Greek and some American born. Most of the children were first or second generation. The parents were very anxious to have their children become good Americans. They themselves had applied for citizenship papers. They attended evening school classes. I later taught classes for the foreign born and helped start a daytime class for women in 1939. They came from all eastern and central European countries. Germany was well represented. Very rarely did we get Spanish speaking people. I taught a number of people who had been in concentration camps in Germany and managed to escape from the Nazis. They came to get work and an education for their children.

The immigrant parents were anxious to have their children behave themselves and to learn everything they possibly could. We didn't have to worry about discipline problems. I would stop by and see parents on the way home from school. They were all neighborhood schools at the time. The fathers worked and the mothers were usually at home. No child wanted to have a bad report sent home to his parents and if you punished a child he would also get punished by his parents. Parents had an attitude of great respect for the teachers and backed you up in everything you did.

They didn't let the children speak their own language. They encouraged their children to speak English so they would learn the English language. They didn't even provide for the background of their native culture and their children became completely Americanized.

They learned to do American cooking but often they had ethnic foods, especially for the holidays. The emphasis really was on becoming Americanized as quickly as possible.

The children brought lunch to school, but most went home for lunch. There was no busing in those days.

For the most part there were very mixed neighborhoods in Norwalk. But in South Norwalk the Hungarians clustered together at Whistleville and there were many Italians on Ely Street and behind the railroad. There are still many old-timers there.

There were no apartment houses, mostly one-family houses. Everyone had his own back yard. The children came to school in clean clothes. Their mothers usually made their clothes. They were skilled in sewing, cooking and cleaning.

Norwalk always had plenty of factories and industries. Most were on a small scale, not big like today.

At school we studied industries in town and visited the factories after school or on weekends. You weren't allowed to take time out of the school day. We went to see the bottling of milk that was done on the corner of Center Avenue

and Main Street, about a 10-minute walk from the school. There was a rubber and tire factory, curtain, hat factories, oystering. Oystering was developed by the old-time American families like the Lovejoys.

In the early 1900's many immigrants came from Russia and the satellites, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, countries that don't exist any more. These people came over to escape military service. They were peasants, some middle class and business people, who wanted to avoid the military service. Many started in the factories, then would save up money and open up their own independent little stores. We had no chain stores, no supermarkets. There were the neighborhood kind of stores, candy stores, groceries, meat markets.

There were some farms in East Norwalk, where the Thruway runs now; on East Avenue it was all farm land. Harold Olmstead owned it and I took my class to watch them milk the cows by hand. There wasn't much in the way of modern machinery.

Wherever we went, we walked. We thought nothing of walking 3 miles on a Saturday trip.

There was calisthenics every day. The children played games on the dirt playgrounds, jump rope, marbles, hopscotch, flipping cards. Some of the games go back to all cultures. There are jump rope songs in most European countries.

People were content with very simple things. There weren't many games or toys you could buy, even if you wanted to - just things like dominoes, checkers, balls.

We had a couple of movie houses. Church groups were important in the social life. Picnicking was a big thing. People would just get together and visit and the children would play together.

People belonged to the library and read library books. They owned very few books and they treasured books. I still have my book of nursery rhymes that was printed in 1918. There was a great deal of story telling, reading aloud, reading to each other and talking things over, so the children shared.

We had 2 local newspapers. There were lots of sewing circles where the women would get together and sew, knit and crochet or make quilts and the children were taught all these handicrafts. The children were taught how to embroider, sew, darn so they could fix their clothes. People were content with very simple things. They would help each other. Women would do their canning together. Everyone baked her own bread, cookies and pies. There were very few commercial bakeries. To this day I bake my own bread and cookies and cakes. It's just habit. The children helped with all the housework, part of their regular duties.

Westport had only 3 elementary schools and a combined junior-senior high school. Families from Saugatuck sent their children to Norwalk schools.

I was a substitute in Westport after I got married. When I got married I automatically lost my job, but I could substitute and teach at night. I taught high school equivalency in the evening and the foreign born in the daytime.

Since the late 1800's there has been a tremendous immigrant population coming here. The spanish speaking started within the last 25 years or so, many from Puerto Rico and Cuba.

There were always some black families. They were very well accepted in Norwalk. In the 1930's you only had 1 or 2 in a class. They usually lived in mixed neighborhoods, but even then they had a black section.

I was born right here on South Main Street.

There were many social clubs. They played a very important part in having their parties and picnics and get-togethers. They had their own ethnic songs, dances and meals for the holidays. They helped to maintain parts of the immigrant cultures.

In evening programs the immigrants had to wait 2 years for their first citizenship papers and 5 years for their test and full citizenship. Norwalk started citizenship classes in 1923. They didn't really flourish until the late 1930's with the influx of people escaping from the Nazis. We went twice a week in a regular schoolroom. Teachers were paid $3 a night. You had to pay your own expenses to get back and forth, but trolleys were only 5 cents each way. We had trolleys right up East Avenue to Main and Wall Street; another went to Bridgeport, another to East Norwalk.

Westport and Wilton used to send students to Norwalk High School. Westport was very different from Norwalk. Westport tended to be old-time Americans and wealthy business commuters. Westport was more of a summer resort, a great many people who had beach homes. You had no industry, a few stores, and families who sent their children to private schools. Then people connected with radio and advertising and artists started to move to the country. Gradually, a few started to remain all year.

There were Italians in the Saugatuck section. They had farms. In many cases they had to go to Norwalk schools. They walked to school. Cars were not so popular in those days, even if they weren't expensive. It was 600, 700 dollars for a Ford in those days.

I taught 1930-37 and 1937-50 was a substitute teacher and taught the foreign born. My husband died in 1952. Then from 1953-59 I taught in Norwalk at the New Roosevelt school.

In my grades we drew from the neighborhood. Did not teach any foreign languages in the elementary school. In high school they taught Latin, French and Spanish.

When I went to the old Norwalk High School, 1925-28, I learned both Spanish and French, but our language teachers were native Americans.

When I taught the foreign born, I didn't know a word of their language. We did everything with pictures. I poured water from pitcher to glass and would write it on the board and they would repeat the words and the activity. They learned so rapidly it was the most remarkable thing. They came in twice a week. By the end of the year they could read newspapers and comprehend them. Everyone could pass the test to get their citizenship papers. On the test they would have you read - usually the first paragraph of the Constitution - and ask questions based on American history and civics.

Those immigrants of the thirties wanted to forget their past cultures. They had been having a very difficult time. They wanted their children to be accepted by the native American population.

There were social barriers to some extent. People feel more secure when they're with people from their own background. Social life took place around churches and neighborhood clubs. We had a public beach that was popular for picnics and a boat used to run to Long Island.

Vaudeville was very big, every Saturday and Sunday at the Palace. There was Chatauqua right on North Main Street where the old Norwalk Hour was. It was a big open lot where the Chatauqua came every summer with performances and lectures.

There was more community entertainment than today. Redman's Hall on Washington Street was a central place for dances.

My family came from Latvia - my father cam over in the 1890's, my mother in 1905. They met here and were married here. They spoke Yiddish, a German dialect. They made sure they learned English immediately, including my grandmother. My father ran a business and everything was in English. My father's brothers came over before he did. There were 5 brothers and he was the second youngest. His brothers originally worked in a brass factory in New York. My grandmother came over in 1892, my father came in 1896. The brass factory moved to Norwalk. That's how the family came to Norwalk.

When my father got off the boat, he immediately got a job selling tea and coffee, house to house canvassing. It didn't take more than a year before he was in the grocery business. And when he came to Norwalk, he opened a general store - there wasn't a thing you couldn't get there. I can remember speaking a little German to my grandmother, but I grew up speaking English. We were a very close family. All 5 generations are still here in Norwalk. I have 3 children, 2 sons and a daughter. None of them went very far away, even to school. The old time families hold together.

When I was little I knew almost everyone in town. Norwalk had a population of 20,000 then. I would stand in front of the store on Sundays when everyone went to church and talk to them all. My father was very well-known. He had a big charge business, no car, not even a horse and wagon. He carried and delivered within several blocks. His store was open 7 days a week. It was a place where everybody met.

A great many of the younger women worked in the factories. The children of the immigrants would go to school until the age of 16. You were not supposed to work until 14 and you had to have working papers. But I had a 13 year old girl in my class, a slow learner, and when she got a factory job, nobody said a word when she didn't come back to school.

There was no such thing as welfare. Every little group took care of its own. If you were down and out, neighbors or a church group would help. There was no government organization you could fall back on. You had to take care of yourself. You had to take care of each other. Families were close. The grandparents lived in the house. There was always a member of the family to take care of the children if the mother went out to work.

Very strong family relationships and an attitude of respect that permeated everything. Parents sent their children to school to learn. They respeced the teacher, minded the teacher. The teacher had the family's permission to beat a child. The children came to school knowing they were expected to learn and the teacher knew she had to teach.

The regular teacher had to teach art and music every week. Everybody had to make the same picture the same way. No creative art was permitted.

Just a handful out of my first class of 40 graduated high school. Most went to work around here.

Today it's different. Especially the Spanish want to retain their culture. Today we have materials in whatever language a child comes in with. But we didn't have a reading problem years ago. There was no TV, little radio. Everything you did centered around the home and school. Teachers concentrated on regular school work. We taught the basic skills. You have a hard time finding the time to teach the basics today. We are very unrealistic if we think schools can do everything, can do a good job for all the different groups in all the different areas. Teachers don't have time to teach today.

In the 1930's the teachers stayed after school and the children often stayed and you helped them. You didn't have to worry about letting them out on time to meet a bus. You knew you could walk home with a child. Schools were closer to parents. We would talk to each other. We had a very structured program; every school in the state had the same books and curriculum guides. There were no school libraries, no films, no popular music.

Children took elocution lessons and music lessons. Sports were after school, all extra curricula. There was a year of sewing in the 7th grade and a year of cooking in the 8th. Had to eat whatever you made and wash up afterwards. That was just for girls. Boys got shop.

Caroline Mary Newman - Norwalk - Polish

I am a Catholic from Poland, a small village named Misko. I came to the U.S. in 1914 just before the First World War. All my friends started to go to America one by one. So, I said, why can't I go and make money for my poor parents. We were very poor. I only had two dresses, one for school and one for home. I was born in 1898.

I came first to New York City. My cousin was supposed to call for me but something happened to her and I was left in Ellis Island for 3 days crying my eyes out. My parents had to borrow $200 to send me on the trip and I had to have $25 in my pocket to get into the U.S. Somebody stole my $25 from my pocket while I was crying and I was left without a penny. I wanted to kill myself. Then a nice man came and asked if anyone was without money and without someone to meet them and needed a place to go. I went to him and he said, "Child, don't cry," and he took me to the Polish immigration home. They bought me a hat, they bought me a suit, they bought me everything and they took me to church next day and I'm beginning to get happy.

I needed to find work, but what kind of a job could a girl get without speaking English. I got a job as a servant. I was 16. I got so lonely there. I want to go back to Polish Immigration home. I got lost. It was snowing. I cried. I met policeman and I said in German, "I am lost." He put me on elevated train and showed me how to get back to my place where I worked. I worked for them for 5 and one-half years. I got paid $8 a month. They raised me to $10 a month. Then I left and went to another home and got $18 a month. I worked there 4 years. I wanted to make more money, wanted to be waitress to make tips. I went to hotel and meet my husband there. He was head chef. I was first a chambermaid and then waitress. I was making good money. My husband was Czechoslovak and he spoke 7 languages. He was 17 years older than me. He was a good cook. He made good money. I only went to school to 7th grade.

I knew him 4 years before I married him. We got married and he took me on honeymoon to Atlantic City. He took me to Europe to see my parents. My mother so happy to see me. We stayed 8 months in Europe.

What a life I had. He made enough money for me. He was an experienced chef.

First my husband worked in New York. I'm in Norwalk about 24 years. I had a little boy and one girl. My biggest wish was to put my children through college. My son went to Columbia College. I told my daughter to get educated. She went to U. Conn. My daughter met a boy who didn't go to college in Norwalk. She married him. She's happy. She lives in Redding. She has 3 children. My son is in California, married and has 5 children.

When we came to Norwalk, we bought a house. Everything was for the children. I belonged to the Rosary. You pray and sing and get together and have meetings. We had no time for social clubs. I was busy at home. Home was my heaven. I was so happy to have two good children. My family makes me so happy. I didn't want to do anything else.

In New York City I had the Polish Immigration home. We would get together and eat and drink and talk and dance. We danced the polka. My father taught me how to dance the polka. Now it's different. Everything in Poland is modern like here.

When I was little in Poland we played games. We made mud pies, mud houses, mud people. We were too poor to have bathing suits. When we went to the river to swim, I remember boys hid our clothes.

My husband died in 1957. I still live in our house. I have 5 rooms in the back of the hospital. I used to drive. I had a stroke last time I was in Poland. I took my granddaughter there to learn Polish history.

I can't get to stores by myself now. I wait for my daughter. She comes once every two weeks and I buy things for two weeks.

I have a college student who lives with me. He's good company. He took me to the Red Coach for my birthday.

My son's coming to visit me because there's a convention. I have a good son. My daughter's a good girl.

I have a Polish neighbor, a Hungarian neighbor, an American neighbor. They are all so nice. We have tea and food together. Sometimes I bake yeast cake, Babka, with raisins for Easter. Mostly I cook American now, my daughter's style.

Steve Cenatiempo - Norwalk - Italian

From the Island of Ischia, province of Naples. Owner of Atlantic Seafood Market in Norwalk. In U. S. 24 years.

In Italy I never was in the fish business. Our family was in the fruit business. We would go all around with a little horse and wagon. I didn't really choose the fish business. I had a friend who was looking to sell. Next thing I know I'm in the fish business.

For about 16 years before that I worked in factories, construction, a little bit of everything.

I came to Norwalk because my brother came here 5 years before me. He's a beautician. A different smell altogether.

I had 5 years of elementary school in Ischia. We had a farm there. I was single. I never stay home at night. Always go out. Go to a bar. Bars not like here. You had tables, could play Italian games. We'd play for a cup of coffee, a caramel. At that time money was tight. We had fun. We'd go out after girls. We did our dancing outside on the terraces, with friends with guitars and accordians. Or we'd gather at a friend's house with records and a Victrola. We used to have fun. We sang Italian songs and had Italian musicians. That was 25, 26 years ago. We danced the tarantella, the tango, the samba, whatever was in style. No girls, man and man. I don't think I remember I danced with a girl in Italy. It was a small town and the fathers wouldn't let girls go out and dance with boys, make them some kind of bad girl or something. We'd gather with guys and dance with guys. The first girl I danced with was on a ship coming over to this country.

Today girls go anyplace, more free in Ischia but much stricter than here.

When I first came here it was very, very hard for me meeting girls. It shocked me.

I learned to speak English here. I got married here in this country. My wife is Italian, she comes from Sicily and we have 3 kids, 3 boys, 14, 12 and 8. We're very happy and life is very interesting when you have a nice family and you do the things you like to do. I'm bringing up my boys 99% Italian. We try to get them to speak Italian, but they don't speak it. We go back to Italy to visit relatives. Last year my mother and this year my father came over here to live with my sister.

The boys love to go back. Life is nice there.

We live like Italians, we think like Italians; we do the things we learn from our mothers and fathers. We eat Italian, of course. We enjoy our Italian food. We go out with Italian friends, we do Italian dances and go to see Italian films. There are Italian dances in Norwalk and Darien, Italian bands playing Italian songs, traditional and modern mixed.

At a wedding during the day we take our boys and they like to dance. Italians now try to catch up with dances in style today. Italians will dance anything to go along with the crowd.

Most of my friends born in Italy. There are some domestic Italians. Some of my friends married different nationalities but it don't make no difference. We

have fun. There is a difference between those born in Italy and domestic Italians. A person born here does not think like a person born in Italy. I think a born Italian is more sure of himself. He stands on his own feet.

I am very involved in soccer. I always followed it, played it, lived with it. Soccer is on my mind. I played on amateur teams in Ischia. Over here I played with St. Anne's Club, then moved over to the Dante Alighieri - they're both local Norwalk clubs. Now we have the Norwalk Soccer Association and I happen to be vice-president of that. We're not doing so good this year. Our home field is Broad River School here in Norwalk. We play all over Connecticut. We play every Sunday, 2:30 - 3 o'clock. Most of our team are Italian from Italy. We have an English boy, we have some American boys, and we got another fellow, a South American.

In Connecticut there are 14 teams split into 2 tournaments, the South and the North. We're in the South. The farthest we go is Waterbury. We have a good following at home. Two weeks ago we had over 500 people on the field.

On Sunday I'm on WMMM with John La Barca's Italian house party. I give Italian soccer scores which I pick up on short wave radio and I do comments on each important game. Along with all that I have my kids. They participate in the Norwalk Little League, so it's a crazy day on Sunday. My second son plays hockey.

We do eat a lot of fish in my house, 5 times a week. I like spaghetti a lot. I eat just about everything. We broil or bake our fish. The only kinds of fish we ate in Ischia were like smelts or shiners. We ate them fried. My mother cooked pasta and beans. Sometimes we had spaghetti 10 times in a week, all different ways, spaghetti with marinara sauce, with rabbit. In Ischia rabbit is very popular, cooked a special way, just right.

We celebrate American holidays. For Christmas we like Italian cookies, roasted chestnuts, an old tradition. In Italy there is always a feast, about 30 feasts in the little island of Ischia alone. A procession, then went to the church to pray, then we'd listen to a good band, have chestnuts, peanuts and watermelon and good fireworks. Here we dont' have good fireworks. They don't have anything near what good fireworks should be. In Italy it was spectacular, a show, so beautiful. When you watch them, you're amazed. Those people who do the fireworks were professionals, big names.

Mrs. Mary Moccia - Westport - Italian

I was born in Saugatuck and I've lived here all my life, for 70 years. I have seen Westport change completely.

The children have grown up and married and left because there was no work in this town and you have to make a living. There is nothing in this town for them.

I was the oldest daughter of 6 girls. My father came first when he was a young man in his 20's and worked on the Railroad about 1900. I was born in 1908. He wrote my mother and asked her to marry him. She was tickled to death to come here. She came from a very small town near Naples. It was all farming country. So she came here. They didn't have relatives here. They depended on their friends, their neighbors. All the women were great. They helped each other. They never went to the hospital when a child was born. They had a midwife. The friends and neighbors would bring food, wash the baby, see that everything was done. This went around in circles. Then my mother would help when a neighbor had a baby. They were all Italian women who lived in Saugatuck. They kept their friendships until the day they passed away.

It was all farm land here. It was all woods when we built our own house about 27 years ago.

The house my parents bought was at the end of Davenport Avenue. It was a 6-room house with 2 acres. We had potatoes, peas, tomatoes, peaches, pears, apples, all the produce you could think of. I used to can 2,300 jars of tomatoes every year. My father farmed every inch of that land. We never had to go to the store to buy food. We had a cow, we sold the milk. We had chickens, so we sold eggs and chickens. We even had a goat and my mother and my husband drank the goat's milk. We even raised a kid and when we killed it we gave it to all the neighbors.

My father was killed accidentally at the age of 52 while working at Bridgeport Hydraulic. I was the only one married. Us girls went out to work. We had no welfare then. You had to find your own way out. I went to Staples High School through 10th grade and the Bridge Street School, now called the Saugatuck School.

My father built an oven outside and the neighbor women had a day each when they could come and bake bread. It was fired with wood, just like the old ways of making bread. You'd put the bread on a round board, put it in the oven and bake it. At Easter time my mother would make cake. They had no recipes then. They'd just keep adding things, then put it in the oven. It tasted great.

My parents both spoke Italian. My mother had no English at all when she came. That's why I speak Italian. I spoke only Italian until I went to school. We had no problem picking up English. My younger sisters spoke more and more English. We taught my mother a few words of English and my father picked up the language at work.

My husband even raised turkeys when we were first married. Today nobody thinks of raising anything in the back yard.

At Christmas, if someone got sick, a friend would come and bring food. We'd go out to visit, one neighbor with the other, whole families.

We lived on Davenport Avenue next to the Bradleys, had a brook and land. My father had started building another house on the property, he was building it himself, then he was killed and my mother had it built, a two-family house. I lived there with my mother for 22 years. I took very good care of my mother. My mother passed away at 89. She really enjoyed her property.

We had fave (Italian beans) - we would eat them raw with homemade bread. In winter time we had polenta (corn meal). My mother made sausage and put it in big tubs...in the wine cellar, it was all dirt, ice cold like a refrigerator. In the winter she would cook the sausages with tomato sauce, put a hole in the center of the hot polenta and put in the sauce and sausage. It was wonderful.

They all made wine. My father made wine from elderberries. Then we raised our own grapes, concord grapes, so then he made grape wine. Underneath the grape vines we had a table set and had picnics in the summer.

When he passed away everything went. We went to work in Norwalk, at the sewing machines in the factories. I worked until I was 65. My mother took care of my son when he was little.

To Italian people St. Anthony is the patron saint. In my mother's town St. Anthony was the patron saint. The women got together and wanted to have a feast for St. Anthony. That was the beginning of St. Anthony's Club. The men arranged a parade. We had capes and hats made that said St. Anthony on them. We marched up Riverside Avenue. The men carried the statue of St. Anthony. They would give money for the privilege of carrying the statue.

In the procession we had 50, 60 women who belonged to the club and the men. Most of the ones who got the club started were born in Italy. Everything was donated for the feast. We worked awfully hard. Sometimes we had 250 people for dinner. It cost $1.50 and we gave them a lot to eat. Italian chicken soup, spaghetti, chicken with salad, coffee and dessert. We were happy to make $100 and it all went to build a hall. We started to build the Hall in the 1930's. The society started in the 20's. We worked very hard to get the Hall started. Young people today wouldn't work hard like that.

My mother and her friends decided to make pizzas to make money for the Hall, to sell pizzas at the Hall on Friday nights. They'd go early in the morning, faithfully every Friday. I remember one night it was snowing so hard and I asked them not to go, but they went.

We had weddings there. We had my son's wedding dinner there. People would come from all over to have our dinner.

June 13 was the feast day. The procession would start at the Hall, would stop at Assumption Church for mass, then up Saugatuck Avenue to Main Street and back. People had a lot of faith in the saint. They would pin money on his ribbons, would pray to him for help and miracles. They made gifts of gold; those stayed on the statue.

When we decided to rent the Hall, we took out the Saint and put the statue in the church cemetery in a crypt. It's kept there, not taken out any more. I don't think we'll ever have parades again. The old people are gone. There are no new immigrants coming to Saugatuck any more. Our sons and daughters have married and left town. They don't believe in feasts and parades. They go to church, but they don't go for taking part in ceremonies.

When a member passed on we would buy a wreath, then later we gave $100 to the family. Now we give $200.

The feast was stopped when the war broke out.

Our meetings were run in Italian. Most spoke better Italian than English. That's what kept the bunch together, because they spoke Italian. The Club was just what they wanted.

Today there are only 12 to 15 at the meetings. There are only a few under 65.

Saugatuck still has the old houses because the old people won't leave. It's kept nice. When the Thruway came in, they moved houses but most people stayed in the area. It would break the hearts of the old ones to leave.

All our members really care about the Hall. Someday maybe we'll take it back, but who will go there.

We walked to school in the winter. The snow was over our knees. We had no boots then, just leggings. We never missed school. We'd go from 9 to 3:30. We had no sports activities. The bathrooms were outside at the Bridge Street School. We always walked to school with our friends. I went up to the 10th grade. I loved school. I wanted to stay. But I had to go to work when I was 14 years old to help the family out.

The only sports we had were track and baseball. It was all studying. When we got home we had studying and more chores. We all had jobs at home.

We didn't have dates. We had no electricity. At 6 o'clock, after supper, we'd do our homework, then up to bed at 7.

My husband came from Europe at 17 and was living with an aunt in Stamford. We met when our family visited friends in Stamford. He asked my parents if he could see me and that's how we got together.

I was married at 19 and he was 23. We lived upstairs and my mother lived downstairs.

Our entertainment was for the whole family to visit each other. They would sit at the table 3, 4 hours, eating and drinking.

Stamford to Westport was a big trip.

I remember when we sisters wanted to go to the movies in Norwalk. We asked my father two weeks before to get him ready. 4 of us girls and cousins came down all dressed up and he said, "Where are you going? Go upstairs and go to bed." I was about 14, 15. But we didn't dare answer back. "Night time is no time for a woman to go out." We just went to bed and that was the end of that.

Boys were allowed to go out. It was the girls they worried about. My mother said, "You've got to get married young. You're an old maid by the time you're 20." Some of my girl friends married at 16.

Reverend Zoltan Szabo, Pastor of Hungarian Reformed Church of So. Norwalk

I was born in Hungary. I'm a naturalized citizen. I went to seminary in the U.S. The charter members of the church speak Hungarian and want services conducted in Hungarian while the younger members speak both languages and want services in English. Therefore, we have two worship services, an early mass in English and the second in Hungarian.

I came here 3 years ago from Columbus, Ohio. We made a Hungarian village in Columbus and now they're building a cultural center.

There is a large Hungarian community in Norwalk. They started in the 1880s to appear in large numbers. Those of the Reformed Church, many came from the same small town in Northern Hungary, and by 1893 they had their own Hungarian Reformed Church with an accredited pastor. The parishioners saved from their meager funds to build their own church. There were 335 charter members and family church dues were $1.25 quarterly. The first church on Lexington Avenue was built for $1,620 and was dedicated in 1896.

There was a continual influx of immigrants. They needed more space for a parish house, Sunday school and in 1906 had to build a new, larger church.

What brought them here? It was depressed in Hungary then. They were skilled workers - butchers, tailors -- and were able to make good money here. They all came from the same 5 villages located close to each other. People started to flow over when they heard the good news that those who left them had found a good life in the U.S. There was prosperity in Norwalk. The congregation multiplied from 35 to 35 hundred.

They had difficulties because if someone doesn't speak English fluently enough, then they don't pay full salary. You cannot earn what you need. You cannot take full advantage of your capacities. You have to cut down.

Most difficulty was with the Irish who didn't like the Hungarians. There were street fights and constant fights in the schools.

The Hungarians established themselves and became respected in the community. I know there were city council men in the past who were Hungarian. There were police chiefs and even the present police chief is Hungarian. They became realtors, contractors and businessmen.

Some came later in 1956. Our church President came in 1956. He works 6 days a week and 10 hours each day. He owns his own business. They never can work enough. He has built his own apartment house.

Our vice president is a third generation Hungarian who owns his own glass factory. He still speaks fluently in Hungarian.

They are all self-made men.

We have a Springwood neighborhood association that was established by the former pastor. About 70 percent of the congregation lives in a one-half mile area around the church. Another one-half area has 25% of the congregation. Only about 25 families come from other towns.

There used to be a Nationality Fair. We had a Hungarian dance group that performed in the schools. Now we have another Hungarian dance group that has been organized under a professional dancer. They rehearse in our hall every Wednesday night from 7-9.

We have quite a few patriotic holidays. March 14 is the same for Hungarians as July 4 is for Americans. That was the time when the Hungarian people enforced their constitution in spite of the monarchy which oppressed them. It was the time of the Austro-Hungary Empire under the Hapsburg Monarchy. The Hapsburgs wanted to make the Hungarians first beggars, then Germans. But there was a popular uprising among the Hungarian people in 1848. The Hapsburgs wanted to assimilate the Hungarians, but the Hungarian people rose on March 15 in order to require the monarchy to keep the letter of the Hungarian constitution and to stop making Hungary poorer and poorer. The Emperor gave in at that time and accepted the points to abolish landlords and free the peasants and serfs. It was a day for equality and freedom, a bloodless revolution. The Hapsburg Emperor at that time was pressed by other uprisings, so he had to give in.

Each year, in our own church hall, we have a patriotic day with songs, dances and speeches in celebration of March 15. It is significant because it spear-headed the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 when the Hungarian people rose against the Russians and fought a violent fight. For about a week the Hungarians had their freedom, but then the Russians put down the uprising.

Another Holy Day is October 6. Two years after the March 15 revolution, in 1849, Emperor Franz Joseph brought the Russian Czar's army to crush the Hungarian revolution. It is ironic to note that 1100 years before the Hungarians had migrated from what is now Russia. Now the Russians entered Hungary. The Hungarian army surrendered to the Russian general who accepted the truce and promised the leaders freedom. But Franz Joseph hated Hungarians. He hung 13 Hungarian generals on October 6. It was a sad day for Hungary.

October 22 is the date of the most recent revolution. We commemorate both the 6th and the 22nd on the same Sunday. Many Hungarians came to the U.S. after 1956 because of the upheaval and the oppression.

On August 20th each year there used to be a procession in Budapest with the petrified arm and the crown of St. Stefan who was the first Hungarian emperor canonized by the Pope. The crown left Hungary after the Russian invasion in 1944 and was given to the U.S. for safekeeping. In 1978 President Carter sent the crown back to Hungary. The 1,000 year old crown is now kept in a museum. August 20th is a holy day. In our Hall we have a program or a sermon.

We have our own dances with a Hungarian orchestra in May and October. A Hungarian committee associated with the church has 2 dances a year, in February and November. Our church organizations put on programs.

We have a radio program on WNLK Sunday at 5 o'clock.

I am involved with an urban redevelopment program...a board of 19 members, civic leaders. We selected 5 areas to be rebuilt, one in South Norwalk, the other is the Lexington, Ely Avenue area where the church is located.

It's a nice church, an interesting monument. It can seat some 600 people. We have a wonderful pipe organ and stained glass windows. A chapel furnished with original Hungarian furniture handpainted with ethnic decorations.

Our Hungarian people are aroused by the oppression of human rights in Hungary and Czechoslovakia where ethnic schools are closed and do not permit the Hungarian language. There is harrassment of the churches.

At Christmas this year, 1978, we received a family that fled Hungary, parents and their 3 little girls. They came as they are without anything. They fled the harrassment of the Roumanians who took over so much of Hungary after the war.

Our people have been to demonstrate in Washington against the Roumanian dictator and at the U.N. because of the Roumanian's treatment, not just of Hungarians, but of all minorities, to oppress them and to disperse them.

They disperse populations. You cannot get a job in your own home town, you have to go to another section of the country. The only employer is the state. Then Roumanians are brought in to work on Hungarian land.

Our present church membership has people from Czechoslovakia, Roumanian Hungary and that part of Hungary now added to Russia. Those who have gone back to visit have received visas but have not been allowed to visit their own villages.

This is why they are so happy here, to live in a free country. They can prosper, have their human rights and religious rights secured. We have a happy congregation here. We contribute to the United States.

Eddy Brown - Norwalk - Black

Janitor at the old Norwalk High School - 55 years old.

My father was a minister and was sent to the church on Wood Street in South Norwalk. They're on Quincey Street now. My mother came in 1928 when I was 5 years old.

In South Norwalk then there were only 500 or 600 colored people, most worked as domestics or in factories. Most came, like me, from South Carolina.

Most came up to better themselves one way or other like any people from European countries. Life in the south was hard then. I don't know if it happened for better or worse. You don't know everyone now like you did in the old days. I'm practically a stranger here now.

Church was a strong gathering place. When newcomers came to town, the church was the main outlet for help. We had a very strong religious group. Then people became involved with other organizations like the NAACP.

Norwalk changed from a close knit family to a political set up. There was a colored Democratic Club. When I became 21 and could vote, I went into the club. It was not so powerful as it is today.

The black man was never accepted in the mainstream. He was a Democrat or a union man but he didn't belong to the AFL or CIO; he was in a different branch. I went on the railroad as a waiter, but we had to belong to a different branch of the union. We had the Brotherhood of Railroad Porters. They were able to control all the black unions.

Norwalk has changed so radically, an old timer would never accept it today. Like in South Norwalk, every store on Main Street, every store on Washington Street and Ely Avenue was open 7 days a week and until midnight on Sundays. Nothing cost much money. You could buy all your clothes there on credit. That's how you survived.

When I was young I never had a key for the door. The iceman would come, you would leave a note on the window. Nobody locked their doors.

There's a big change in Norwalk. Some people blame society. I think family ties have disappeared. There's not respect for mothers and fathers. Today kids do anything they want to. You respected the teacher in school. Now teachers have no control. Parents go out to work. Kids are on their own.

When I came along, my father was making only $8, $10 a week but my mother stayed home and we all lived on that money. Now there's nobody home to raise the kids, that's why you got problems.

I was lucky when my kids came along because my mother was living and stayed with the kids. The kids couldn't get away with anything.

Today they have to work to exist, not to live. Somebody else buys a new car, so you have to buy one. So you continue in hock.

I walked to school. I didn't have a nickel for the trolley. But I don't regret it. It made a man of me.

In 1935, 36 in Norwalk we had trolley transfers. There were trolleys to Bridgeport, to Stamford; you'd get a transfer to Portchester, transfer to the Bronx and go all the way to the Yankee Stadium for a nickel. They let all us kids in for nothing. The soda was free and people would buy us hot dogs. I saw more free games than I can afford today.

There were ball fields, a circus grounds. We had colored teams and white teams. It was semipro baseball. There was always something constructive going on. You didn't have anyone tearing up nothing. We had Noroton Point, beaches, playgrounds. You could take an excursion Sunday morning on the train, $1 for a round trip to New York from 9 A.M. to 9 P.M., take a subway for a nickel and spend the day in Coney Island.

I washed dishes after school to make money and cleaned the dining room floor. I got $1 a day.

In the summer there was the open air trolley and you could jump on it and get a ride.

In those days you were happy. Now you don't know. Progress brings misery.

World War I changed the town. There were defense factories and people came from all over the country for jobs. This was a booming section. Then you had a lot of people just dollar hungry. They made money, but we lost our families. It all went haywire. We lost our families, our community. They took the farm land. Big cities encouraged blacks to come up from the south to work in the factories.

Farmers left for the city. They made big money in the factories but when the factories closed down, they had no education, couldn't do anything and went on welfare. Nobody's farming any more. The land my folks planted in the south is now all trees. Nobody's there to plant the land.

The old people died and the young didn't bother. They sold the land, and gave up the businesses in South Norwalk. Now a lot of factories are moving to southern states. If a young man wanted to make it today, he should go south.

Maybe somebody will find an answer. Somebody better or we're all going to be lost.

This Christmas I went into a store and nothing was made in America. The factories we had in Norwalk are all gone.

When we came to South Norwalk it was a seaport, the leading oyster place in the East. There were oyster shops along Water Street. My father used to open oysters over there.

Where did we go wrong in Norwalk? We went from 30,000 to 90,000 and nobody could cope with it.

You went to the ice cream parlor, it was a big thing. Nobody had a car. We went to Hungarian shows in the theatre on Lexington Avenue. They had movies, they were serials and you had to keep going to see all of it. South Norwalk had 3 theatres, the Rialto, Empress and the Palace, a hotel, stores.

I think TV brought some problems. The kids sit in front of TV all day long.

We had 2 papers. Now there's one. New York City had 20 some odd papers.

In the 30's Norwalk was a friendly community. Anybody you'd pass on the street would say hello, speak to you. The Mayor would say hello. When President Roosevelt came to Norwalk, to the Green, he was in an open limousine with the top down and I walked up to him and shook his hand. He wasn't afraid like today.

We didn't have money for me to go to college. If I was younger, I would be in school and get a certificate. In today's society you've got to have a piece of paper that says you're qualified.

Mr. Mondonaldo, Director of the South Norwalk Community Center - Puerto Rican

I come from a very large family. We were 18 brothers and sisters. I am number 14, one of the youngest. We had very conservative traditions. We were asleep by 8 at night and up at 5 in the morning. Before I went to school I had to work with cows and goats and had to get water from the river. I had to carry two gallon drums 5 times up and down the hill. You had to get water to take care of your needs. We had animals that we killed and we had meat. We only killed a cow for a big fiesta. We did not have a Frigidaire to keep meat. My mother prepared pork very well. She fried it for a long time to keep it and put it in the air to dry, like ham. She cooked with firewood. We had plenty of trees. The house was high off the ground and the firewood was kept under it to keep it dry. When I was very little my house was made like a tipee, of reeds. Then we moved to a wood house with zinc nailed to the wood.

Now almost everyone uses concrete, because of the hurricanes.

Now almost every house has electricity and gas.

When I was little we slept in hammocks; 4 or 5 can sleep in one room that way. The girls slept in beds.

The women did the clothes, the cooking, the housework. She sewed by hand, used charcoal irons, did everything by hand. We were very poor. There was no time to play. One day a week on Sunday we did not work.

We owned about one-quarter acre of land and rented 99 acres. Everything we ate we produced except salt and sugar. We grew rice, beans, yams and green bananas, all root vegetables.

We lived very far from the center of town. When I went to school I had to walk 4 miles. It's mountain country, up the hill and down the hill. We went by walking or horse. It was a hard life but a good life. There was no money around. I worked for 75¢ a day on a farm, that's the hardest work, from 7 a.m. to 5 at night. I made that 75¢ a day in 1959 when I was a grown up man, 17 years old. You had to work for everything you do. My father accepted no help from the government. He was independent. I did not have an opportunity to go to high school. Only 2 in our family reached high school. You had to pay transportation to go to the city to high school. Now they have a bus. I didn't have the money.

Here in this country the rich live in the country and the poor in the cities. In Puerto Rico the poor live in the country and the rich in the cities.

I was 18 when I came to Norwalk. There are now 9 of my family in Norwalk. I went to Norwalk High, had 4 years of adult education and 2 semesters of English at Norwalk Community College. That's all my education.

Most of my friends are Spanish and speak Spanish. In English I have trouble. The English in Puerto Rico is English with an accent. We speak Spanish in the home. My wife speaks no English. I am conservative about my wife and women.

My wife was a neighbor of my family in Puerto Rico. She is also from a very poor family. She came to Norwalk and lived with my brother-in-law. She is light skinned. I am dark-skinned. There are so many races in Puerto Rico. My mother was Spanish, a Basque. My father was dark. My grandfather died at the age of 115.

I am conservative like my father. In Puerto Rico girls and boys were not allowed to walk alone. They fall in love by watching the eyes. They have to wait before they are allowed to get married. There is no divorce and no break in families. They had a lot of children. My mother married about 17 and had her last child at 46. I believe the man is head of the family. I believe in traditions. My father was too conservative. I was not allowed to look in my father's face, had to keep my eyes down and never answer back.

I am proud of my past. I worked on a farm, now I do professional work. Sometimes I wish I could go back to that life.

I am Catholic. All my family are Catholic. I follow the church very closely and participate. When I was little I wanted to be a priest but I did not have the opportunity or education.

I have a lot of faith. I read a lot in the Bible. I serve my church every Sunday and three nights a week. I helped to start a Spanish church in Norwalk. First it was St. Mary's and now we moved to St. Joseph's. We talked to the priests to have Spanish mass. Now we have 2 priests who speak Spanish. I started working as a custodian at St. Joseph's Center - it was church-supported then. Now it's called the South Norwalk Community Center and it's supported by the state. I moved to be assistant director and now I'm director. That's in 13 years. The Community Center serves 15,000 people, about 50/50 Spanish speaking. The others are of all races.

I have three children - 12, 9, 20 months. It is very diddicult to bring up children here, a different country, a different country. The children are bilingual. I pray with the children and family when I have a chance. My wife doesn't have my knowledge and education. I see all kinds of people as a counselor. I can make better decisions for children because of my experience. I like to be with children. Last year we went to Puerto Rico with the children for the first time. On January 10th everyone walks from different towns to sing and celebrate. In Puerto Rico the children walked with me when I sang. Here, the children don't go with me.

Me and my friends celebrate Christmas and New Year's by going from house to house to sing folk songs. It's called a Parandal.

At Christmas we kill a big pig and eat it with bananas and rice and give it to the people who come by to sing.

Theresa Amato - Norwalk - Italian

I was born in 1903.

I was born in New York. I came to Norwalk when I was 9. I was in a home in Westchester for 2 years. My mother left us and my father didn't know what to do. We were two boys and a girl, one brother was older than me and one younger.

One day I was playing and I found my mother. She put me under her coat and said she'd never let me go again.

I lived with my brothers and my mother in Norwalk. I went to so many schools. My father used to come and get me and take me to New York. Then my mother would come and get me. I went to 7th grade and stopped. I was glad to get out of school at 14. I'm sorry today. I looked older than 14. I weighed 155 pounds. They hired me in a toy shop. Then I got married at 17, a sailor.

My parents were born in Italy and spoke Italian. If we didn't talk Italian at home my mother would give it to us. Sure, I speak Italian. I was in the hospital and a priest came in and told me I spoke wonderful Italian. My mother was like a girl friend. We were always together.

The sailor I married was a big gambler. He was Italian. I divorced him.

I was raised like an old-fashioned girl.

Then I remarried. Am I glad I married him. I had 2 boys with my second husband. He was born in Italy and came to Norwalk when he was 4 years old. He made bullets during the war. He was nothing to look at, but he was a lovely man. After the war he made pizza pies. He worked so hard.

When I was little my mother had a lady make my clothes. I climbed trees. I was a tomboy. I played jacks. I played in front of our house. I couldn't go any further. When I kept company I sat on one side of the room, the boy on the other. My mother wouldn't let me out of her sight. No social things. No parties. No dances.

My son is 42 years old and he lives with me. He's not married.

My husband was never home, always working. He bought a house for $5000. Today they want to give me $50,000 for that house. I have been there 35 years. All my life was Lexington Avenue and Ely Avenue in Norwalk. The only time I travelled was when I took my son to the hospital in New York. He was born with a harelip and had 7 operations.

I don't drive. I never walk. My son takes me shopping. He works 12 hours a day. I shop downtown. The stores are different now. Everything's changed.

I'm 75. I wouldn't believe it. I've been in and out of hospitals. I had 7 operations. Once I made 500 cream puffs for my daughter's wedding shower.

Teresa Ferrandino - Norwalk - Italian

I live in my own two-family home in Norwalk.

My family is from Salerno. My father is 97, going to 98. My mother and father had 2 children when they came from Italy.

I was born on Mott Street in New York City and went to St. Patrick's school. I was married 50 years.

I was 15 years old when I came to Norwalk with my parents. They had 10 children - 5 are still living. I'm 71.

We lived in a 2-family house. My father was a furniture maker in the old country. In New York he worked inside pianos. My sister and I did the book-keeping for him. When we lived in Norwalk, he commuted to New York. He spoke Italian. We all speak Italian. He worked hard. We had my grandmother and grandfather living with us. Then he sent for his 2 sisters and we had them living with us. He certainly had a big family. About 12 people always around the table. He used to make his own wine. He married off his sisters and cousins.

My sister married a fellow from Norwalk, that's how we came to Norwalk. She married a barber, he had a barbershop in Moose Home on South Main Street. Moose Home is a club, they have parties. It was one happy family years ago, everyone was together.

In Norwalk, my father worked for the furniture company on North Main Street. It's still there. My mother never worked, she took care of everyone.

At 15 I went to work at Century Underwear. I worked as a sample maker in lingerie. In East Norwalk there were a lot of factories.

I worked until I met my husband. I was 20 when I met him. I used to go to the movies, the Rialto, and after the show we'd go for ice cream. There was an ice cream parlor, a nice Greek man sold ice cream on South Main Street. I met my husband at the movie show. His sister worked with me and he wanted to meet me, the girl with the spit curls. I wore my hair with spit curls then.

I have 3 boys and 1 girl, 3 great grandchildren. I think children are the best thing in your life.

My husband worked in a shirt factory. He ironed pleated evening shirts. Then he went to a robe factory and pressed there.

I went back to work soon after we married. I lived with my mother-in-law for a while, then we went to live with my mother. We lived in the living room. We had a couch that opened into a bed. My first child was born at home. Mostly we had our children in the home. My mother had a midwife when her children were born. The midwife took care of you and your baby.

When I went back to work, my first baby stayed with my mother. Then I worked in a factory right across the street from the nursery and I'd pick her up and take her home at 3.

We bought our clothes at the store. We had credit at the store. The store would give you a book. They knew who you were then. Italians, Hungarians - all went there. We got along good with everyone. I had Jewish families as my best friends.

I met Italians after I was married and we moved to an Italian neighborhood.

My father had a pianola, a Victrola, a radio. We had friends in and we danced and played music. At Christmas he built a creche, everything handmade. We'd have bagpipes come in to play Italian songs for the week of Christmas. They were Italian bagpipe players. It was nice. We had a nice Christmas when I was a kid. All the boys in the neighborhood would carry candles and go all through the building.

We had Easter at home with the family. Church was very important. We went to mass, sang in the choir.

We went to St. Joseph's when we came to Norwalk. I still belong to their parish.

Norwalk is not like it used to be. There was more family life. There were beautiful houses along Monroe Street. They knocked them all down. There were trees on the sidewalk, chickens in the back yard, like you were on a farm. Now it's very bad in South Norwalk. I would never walk there alone. When I was young you could go anyplace alone. We really had it wonderful. I loved it when we came here.

My sons were all Navy. My brother was a Navy man. We're all Navy in my family.

My sons have very good jobs.

Michael Vigilante - Westport - Italian

Born in Italy, in city of San Marco in 1903. I lived there until I was 10.

I came here before World War I. I came with my mother and 3 other children to join my father in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

My father was a farmer in Italy. He got discouraged with lack of rain and poor crops and embarked for the U.S. in 1900. He worked as a laborer but he always wanted to get a farm. So, when he had the money, he bought land in Bridgeport and farmed there and took the produce with a horse and wagon to the stores in the city.

I had some schooling. On my mother's side there were priests and teachers. My mother had no schooling. One of the teachers in the family taught me instead of sending me to school.

When I was a child in Italy I worked in the fields which were 6 miles from our home in the city. My mother stayed in the home. In Italy women are supposed to stay home. The men children get to go out and work and learn. My mother cooked so much food. I miss it yet. There were loaves of bread. I ate bread as dessert.

It was the custom for the father to come ahead of the family. My oldest brother went the year before us.

We landed at Ellis Island. My sister had the measles so we stayed a week in quarantine. I remember it. Everything was fine. Then we went by boat from New York to Albany and then train to Pittsfield.

My father knew enough English to get by. I had 2 years of school in Pittsfield. When we moved to Bridgeport, I was 12, 13 and I went to work in a textile shop. It was a struggle all the way through my life. I lived with my family until I was married. I fibbed and got my papers and went to work. There was a need for money. My dad got $7, $8 a week.

My father bought a two-family house in Bridgeport. We were fairly comfortable. Things were getting better. In those days we didn't have friends. Just work and home. I don't remember any fun at all.

I moved to Westport when I was 24, 25, with my wife and 2 children. My parents stayed in Bridgeport on the farm, north of Park Avenue, right in the middle of the city.

I came to Westport to work with Gault. I stayed 6 months then went to work for Esposito taxi. Finally in 1929, I got into the construction business and I've been in that business since. I lived in Saugatuck for a while, then in 1930 I moved to the Post Road where I still live. It was the same year the Westport Playhouse opened in an old cow barn.

I started landscaping and making terraces and approaches and gardens. I like to create things. I made money during the Depression.

The St. Anthony's Society started about 1926-27. Only Italians could belong to it. The Society was started by a group of Italian men. They had lovely

feasts in those days. Everybody would have a fine time. If you needed help in those days, they were all friendly. They helped each other. If you were sick, they visited. The members of the Society liked fun. It was a social club. They had block parties and the St. Anthony's Feast every year. They were very respectful. They helped. That's all gone now.

At the St. Anthony's Feasts we would have stands up on Franklin Street to Saugatuck Avenue selling fruits and nuts, all kinds of white sausages and peppers, every stand would have something different. It was a carnival affair. There was wine. They made wine all the time for their own use in Saugatuck. We had a bandstand for our band and we danced. All drinking and eating and fun, one big happy family, until 1942.

At one time there were 2,300 members of the Society. In 1935 we built our own hall. We had meetings, dinners. The women cooked the dinners. We still own it but we rent it out now.

After the war we couldn't operate. The young ones didn't want to work for the Society. They don't even want to come to the meetings. We're about 40, 45 members now. We dont' run anything any more. We don't have workers.

My children understand Italian but they don't speak it. I tried to teach them, but they didn't seem to get it.

All the children are beginning to separate from the language and don't want to understand what the Society was for. What's left are only the old ones.

There have not been any new immigrants into Westport.

My children went to Westport schools and graduated from high school and went to U.Conn and business school. I have two daughters, one married to an English and one to an Irish.

James Sutton - Norwalk - Irish

My mother had 3 brothers. One brother had 5 children. When his wife died, my mother took two of them and raised them as her own. One of them retired at 40 as an Admiral. When he was Commander of the Forrestal, he invited my mother on Mother's Day and 1100 sailors stood up and saluted her.

I was born in Norwalk in 1915. I was born at home, West Cedar and Ivy Place.

My mother was born in Norwalk, my father in Stamford. My father was a brick layer.

I first went to Washington, then Franklin Junior, then the old Norwalk High on West Avenue.

My father worked in this area. He was a lifeguard at Noroton Point and didn't know how to swim. They had big bands there. He met my mother at the beach. They danced a lot. Excursions, day liners, used to come over from New York on Saturday nights for the dances.

My grandmother was born in Ireland and lived in Norwalk. My grandfather was born in Ireland. They met on the boat and were married when they got off the boat.

On my father's side they were English and met on the boat coming over. He was a mason too. My mother's father worked at the Norwalk Hat Company. I was a baby when my grandfather died.

I played semipro football when I was young. I got $500 a game and $300 a game for basketball. It was a depression and that money was a big help. I worked around in factories for a while. Then I had a store in East Norwalk, a stationery store, 6 or 7 years. I went to Columbia College nights. I took up engineering and then did construction work. I worked on Colonial Green and Famous Artists and the Washington School addition. I had my own company, but then I had a stroke and retired.

I have 6 children; most live in this area.

My parents owned their own house. There were empty lots there then and I always played ball of some kind. I boxed with the Boy Scouts. Some of my friends went into professional boxing.

I started work after high school for a contractor as an apprentice mason. I went to work in the hat factory over on Van Zandt Street. It was the main work at that time. It employed 3, 4 thousand people.

I was 20 when I was married. We met at a dance at Wilton Town Hall. My first wife died when she was young. I married my second wife in 1936. In June I'll be a great grandfather. We met at a dance. I love to dance. I danced all night once.

I played basketball with the Catholic Club. The only real Irish I knew were my cousins. They did Irish jigs and always were singing. But my friends weren't Irish.

The families used to have a lot of parties at home. My grandmother was the greatest cook ever born. She made her own bread and coffee cakes. I used to eat the whole thing.

There were big changes in Norwalk before my time. On Wall Street the Royal James was a ballroom; they had dances there. They played on weekends. People couldn't afford to go out every night. We did go quite often. We took dates there. There were no drinks to buy. No food. Just dances. Later they built stores out of it.

There were speakeasies during the Depression. The girls' parents wouldn't let the girls go. One in Norwalk was in someone's large home. It was beautiful. Drinking and entertainment. No gambling.

I always owned my own house. Now I live right on the water in Harbor View. I had a cabin up at Lake Zoar, the other side of Danbury, for summers.

Three years ago the Norwalk Old'Timers gave me a dinner and an award for being such a good athlete.

Rabbi Byron T. Rubenstein - Temple Israel - Westport

(Temple Israel of Fairfield County was founded in 1948. Membership at that time was less than 30 families who met in the former Norwalk Jewish Center on West Avenue in South Norwalk. In 1959 a Temple was built on Coleytown Road. The present membership is some 560 families. There were Orthodox and Conservative Temples in Norwalk at the time. This was the first Reformed Temple.)

The Jewish groups started to settle here between the First and the Second World Wars. The most significant influx of Jews into Westport and Weston came after the Second World War. They came from Europe, New York City, Norwalk, other parts of the United States.

The majority of the congregation lives in Westport. It was the attraction of the suburbs that brought the Jews here. Westport and Weston were more tolerant than the surrounding communities. Real estate people seem to have directed Jewish families to Westport. Less of that today.

The present congregation is mostly third-generation Jews whose grandparents were immigrants.

We have a number of members from the Hitler period, those who have memories of that experience, but who are settling and becoming Americans, Westporters. It's not a large percentage.

You were speaking of foreign accents. Once in a while you hear them here. The Jewish community has brought over two Russian-Jewish families and are working to bring in a third. The Russians have made a remarkable adjustment, working in the synagogue and in the religious experience that was denied them in Russia. The project was initiated by the community which has supported them both financially and morally. They were helped to find jobs and housing. They live in Westport and work in the area. They are professionals, skilled workers. Their children go to school here. They are active members of the synagogue.

Our congregation is made up mostly of professionals, businessmen, middle and upper class. Some of them are strained financially trying to maintain their standard of life. The Temple has been adversely affected because now women are working. The energies that were devoted to the synagogue are now devoted to careers. So, many families that have a high standard of living are hard pressed financially.

I don't see the Jews as an ethnic group. I see it as an American group that cherishes the American way of life, whose life is laced through with a certain nostalgia for a European past, certain traces of a life style that if not ethnic is ethnicish, but I would say that as far as a Jewish identity is defined, that identity in the area is defined by religious affiliation and to some extent by religious practice. There is fervent enthusiasm for Israel and concern for its well being. If you would ask me what has helped most to strengthen Jewish identity, I would say at the head of the list is a resurgence of feeling for Israel. Before that what aroused us was the Holocaust which aroused a lot of Jewish feelings.

I think that sensitivity to Israel is a quality which is special to the Jews. The threat of a recurrence of the Nazi phenomenon, which is very limited, still -

the moment that chime is sounded, a chill comes over you. So that is something that belongs to the Jewish community.

I think religious observances are different. Jewish holidays make themselves felt in the community.

We dress the same, we eat the same food, we sing the same songs, we are subject to the same socio-economic pressures, we support the same organizations as other American groups. For example, in Westport and Weston high school Jews and non-Jews are largely alike. I would say the ethnic differences are submerged in Weston and Westport: the Jewish community is pretty well integrated.

Jews have a history of community participation, maybe because for so many centuries they were barred from community participation. When the ghetto walls were knocked down, the Jews rushed out into every possible avenue of self-expression and community service. I would say you name any community group and you will find Jews very active in it.

There is something in Jewish tradition and Jewish religion that emphasizes a disworldly concern for human well being and obligation to one's community and for one's fellow man. I wish it were more pervasive.

I would guess that the Jewish population is about 10-12% of Westport and Weston.

The adult education classes at the Temple are Jewish. We talk about Jewish literature, have lectures by Jewish historians. Everything we do at the Temple is emphatically Jewish, because if it were not Jewish here, where would it be Jewish?

We share as enthusiastically as any other group and, in addition, we have this possibility to learn Jewish history. We have a Hebrew school in addition to a religious school. The religious school population has grown. We have a better program today.

Our music is Jewish music, music about Jewish holidays. Outside of liturgical music, there is little Jewish music; it is largely Russian, Polish, German, Israeli. Our art is ceremonial art. Anything outside the religion is an addition. Jewish culture is essentially religious in the U.S. The Jewish experience is essentially a religious experience.

Most ethnic dances a Jew knows are Polish - Jewish, Russian-Jewish, Israeli-Jewish, South African-Jewish. Many of these things we have picked up from other countries and cultures. Like the custom of breaking a glass at a wedding is not particularly Jewish; it was eastern European and someone picked it up.

Sometimes ethnic, religious and national traits are hard to distinguish. We're very impressionable.

Judaism provides the Jew in suburban America with a religious reference point, gives him an identity. In suburban America, it gives the Jew a way of establishing his identity, gives him values from which to evaluate the society in which he lives and from which he can sally out to better society. In suburban America the synagogue, a moral stronghold, is the best way for the Jew to reclaim his identity.

A Jew will survive because of the values he tries to maintain.